

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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WHAT HE COST HER.

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"HALVES," &c.

CHAPTER XII. THE YOUNG GENTLEMEN'S VIEW OF IT.

It was strange, considering that Ella had expressed herself so forgivably with respect to Mrs. Ray's mal-apropos allusion, that she should not again have presented herself at Officers' Quarters, letter Z, from the date of that occurrence until the Sunday following; but so it was.

To some minds, so long an absence, contrasted with the usual frequency of her visits, might almost have suggested that she wished to mark by it her extreme displeasure, and put out of all possibility any recurrence of what had so much annoyed her. But Mrs. Ray and Gracie were too modest to attach such importance to any word of theirs, and thought it the most natural thing in the world, that their prosperous young friend should have engagements of a more attractive nature to take her elsewhere. This was not, however, the case. Ella kept a good deal within doors during the period in question, and, so far from mixing with society, passed her time chiefly in writing letters and reading them. Only those she read she did not write. A very little time sufficed her to dash off the communications she sent away; whereas those she received, which by comparison with her own were brief enough, she pondered over long and lovingly, and when interrupted, would hurriedly thrust into her bosom. When you fall in love at first sight, a week (that is, if you don't

fall out of it again by that time) makes a deal of difference in the way of ripening; it is like very warm weather in the month of May, which brings on everything very quickly, though not always to maturity.

Young ladies nowadays do not, I notice, fall in love; they appear to be all furnished, like the railway trains, with breaks (only these act and the railway ones don't always) to stop themselves at any point of the incline; and no sooner does the danger signal flash forth (from the eyes of mamma) than they stop themselves instantaneously, and even proceed to retrace their steps.

Ella belonged to an earlier generation, to whom expeditions to Gretna Green had hardly yet become things of the past. Her affections were strong, her impulses even stronger; the flame of her suddenly-kindled admiration burnt like that of a petroleum-well, and it was no one's duty to quench it.

The colonel saw how the case stood quite plainly; remarked to himself that the girl had got the bit between her teeth, and would run till she found ploughed land, or a clayey soil, and devoutly hoped she would come upon such obstacles; but he uttered no word of remonstrance. He contented himself with making inquiries, "in case the worst should come to the worst" (so he designated the possible union of these two fresh young hearts), into the position and prospects of Mr. Cecil Landon, and found them eminently satisfactory.

His father was something in the City, the colonel called him a "hunks," but that was his generic term for any elderly person engaged in commercial pursuits—and was very much "respected," a word applied to no class of person while alive, except to City magnates, but reserved for most of us

when we have departed this life. There was no doubt in the colonel's mind, but that the old "hanks" would "jump" at the notion of his son's alliance with the house of Juxon. If any slip between the cup and the lip were to be hoped for, it must occur between the young people themselves; and it was certainly fortunate that they could not meet one another. He did not himself believe in love-making by pen and ink, his own epistolary efforts in that way having been framed with considerable caution, and an eye to possible actions for breach of promise.

In blissful ignorance of these views, Ella went her own road, as was her wont, and felt it could have but one ending. She did not even need Mr. Landon's corroboration of her view upon that subject, though in truth he did corroborate it by implication. She met him, as the phrase goes, half way—nay, it must be confessed, three-quarters—but then he came the rest of the distance very readily. If she was flame, he was tow or touchwood, which burn, we know, with great brilliancy, though from the brevity of their incandescence they are little adapted for domestic use.

He did not put her letters into his bosom; he generally tossed them over to Darall, who at first declined to read them; but on being assured that there was nothing private in them—"nothing catching," was Landon's phrase, "that you haven't got yourself"—and also that there was something about Gracie, which was generally the case, consented.

"You should be a happy man," sighed he, "to be beloved like that."

"Ya-as," said Landon, slowly expelling the smoke from his short pipe. These confidences took place chiefly in one of the back-yards, for the convenience of unmolested smoking, which was at that time contrary to orders. Then, seeing his friend grow grave, he added, laughing, and in his natural tone, "No, Darall, I don't pretend to be indifferent to all this incense; a puppy of that sort would not deserve to be loved at all—would deserve only to be kicked."

"So I was thinking," observed Darall, dryly.

"But it is astonishing how one gets to take these things as a matter of course."

"Does one?"

"Well, yes; this is the third note Ella has written, and it does not affect me—though it's ever so much stronger—half so much as the first."

"It is plain that this girl loves you, Landon," said the other, slowly folding up the letter; "but I am not so sure, from the symptoms you describe, that—that—"

"That the feeling is reciprocated, you would say. Oh, but it is, by jingo! Love her? Why, of course, I love her! Who could help loving her? She is beautiful, and clever, and rich, and very fond of me. What the deuce would you have?"

"Oh, as for me, I should not venture to hope for half as much," said Darall, still gravely.

"Well, and then she's no belongings; one has not to marry a whole family, as so often happens. There will be no mother-in-law, which is itself a great stroke of luck, and no father-in-law, though that doesn't so much signify."

"That's true," said Darall, who had not yet seen the commissary. "Miss Mayne has been very confidential, my dear fellow, to tell you all these particulars."

"Well, she has not gone into details, which I am glad to say she seems, like me, to have no fancy for; but she says that she is absolutely her own mistress, with none but her uncle to be consulted; and then she playfully added that he is the last person in the world she should dream of consulting."

"Then you mean to say that you are already thinking seriously of marriage; you, who are not even of age yet."

"That's no matter, the point is that the young lady is of age," observed Landon. "I hate a fellow who marries for money, but it is pleasant to find it where you have already invested your affections—not only the nest, as it were, but the nest-egg. If it was not so, the governor might forbid the banns, and make himself very unpleasant. He hates my shirking the desk, and I have heard him express himself strongly against early marriages. A man does not know his own mind, according to him, until it is almost time for him to lose it."

"I sincerely hope you will have your father's consent before you marry," said Darall, gravely; "at least, I know if my mother was averse to my doing so—didn't like my choice, or anything of that sort—that it would make me very miserable."

"My dear Darall, you are very easily made miserable," rejoined his friend, rattling the silver with which his pockets were generally well provided. "You should not suffer the feelings of others to affect you so much; they are to be respected, and so forth, of course. But when people

cannot be persuaded into one's own view of a projected step, my notion is to give up persuading, and to take it. Then the argument is at once removed to another plane. Opposition is not to be grappled with like a nettle and crushed; this is a free country; let everyone keep his opinion; but take your own way."

"That sounds pleasant enough," said Darall, smiling.

"And it is pleasant, my dear fellow. The same system is to be employed with disagreeable people. Do not ruffle them by your companionship; do not rub them the wrong way, as you must do if you rub together at all, and make them hate you; but simply avoid them. If I had a disagreeable father—which I have not; the governor and I get on capitally, except on points where we agree to differ—or an objectionable mother, or an unpleasant wife, I should simply go my own way, and let them go theirs. The loss would then be on the right side."

"But, my good friend, a man can't avoid his wife; that is one of the reasons why marriage is such an important step. You have seen two pointers of different opinions coupled together, and what happens?"

"Well, the stronger always goes where he likes, and the other follows—though it is true rather unwillingly. But if you are thinking of Ella, who would wish to do anything to displease her? Is it likely that any man should be attracted elsewhere from her?"

"Indeed I should think not," said Darall; "and especially when he has won her love as you seem to have done. Only as yet, you see, you have not known one another a whole week."

"In that week, my dear fellow," returned Landon, comically, "as the novelists say, we have lived a lifetime. Our future is cut and dried for us. I am not to be expelled, it seems, and her income, combined with the governor's allowance, will enable us to live in clover; it is not the case of a married sub, who has to live in barracks, with only a curtain to divide his sitting-room from his bed-room."

"But will your father make you an allowance if your marriage displeases him, as your choice of a profession has already done?"

"Well, in that event, Ella has enough for two."

"But you wouldn't like to live on your wife's money?"

"Well, a great many better men than I

are quite content to do that, and think themselves very lucky. However, I hope matters will be better arranged, though I am bound to say the governor is just now a little ruffled. Sir Hercules wrote rather seriously about me. 'Your son has disgraced himself,' he said, 'but it has been decided to give him one more chance.' Now my father would in reality have been better pleased if the chance had not been given me. 'You are now about to persevere,' he writes, 'in a calling of which I do not approve, and for which you, at the outset, have proved yourself unfitted; for my part, I am not surprised that one who has been so disobedient as a son should have shown contempt for military authority.' That was rather strong for the governor. Now your mother—excellent woman—seems to have taken a much more sensible view of the matter, though it is true Sir Hercules in your case abstained from using such bad language."

"If he had said 'disgraced,' my mother would not have believed him," said Darall, proudly.

"Of course not, that is where women are so wise; they never believe anything they don't want to believe. And that is not only judicious so far as they are concerned, but fortunate for us men."

"I am bound to say," continued Darall, earnestly, and without taking notice of this philosophical observation, "that the letter Sir Hercules sent home was a very considerate one; and I have little doubt that I am indebted for his forbearance—at all events, to some extent—to the good offices of Colonel Juxon; in other words, to you, Landon."

"Say rather to Ella, my dear fellow," returned the other gaily. "'Your friends, Cecil, will be always my friends,' she writes, which was really very pretty of her; and, you see, she has already proved her words; you may be sure I do not love her the less on that account."

Darall held out his hand, which the other clasped. "You are a good fellow," said Darall, simply; but his thought was something more. "There is no wonder that any girl should fall in love with this man, who has such a gracious way with him, even with me. He will surely make her happy."

Friendship was one of the few sentiments in favour at the Royal Military Academy, though in Darall's case it was not wholly unmixed with envy. He envied Landon his manners; Landon, on the other hand—though, as we know, he acknowledged

its goodness—did not envy Darall his heart, being tolerably well satisfied with his own. It was a notable feature in his character, and certainly added to its charm, that he was jealous of nobody.

Circulars, as we have hinted, had been already issued by the authorities concerning the cadets and their late transgression; Senior-under-officer Bex, and one or two "corporals" had received their congés, while the rest were to have their leave stopped for the remainder of the term, and to be "severely reprimanded;" this last operation (which most naval and military persons, especially cadets, are found to survive) had not yet taken place, and the whole corps were still under arrest until it did.

Consequently, church-parade, which necessitated the marching down to barracks, and so far a temporary enfranchisement, was looked forward to with an unwonted satisfaction. Never before had they donned shako and plume with such hilarity. All the garrison knew, of course, that the Cadet Company was in disgrace, but if remorse gnawed their young breasts, they hid it, as the Spartan did the fox, beneath a sunny smile. In church they were always merry; and when they came out of it, and were marching home with that even step—the one hundred and eighty all moving like one—for which they were so justly celebrated, you would never have supposed they were returning to a prison. On their way thither, this martial throng encountered a certain civil procession, consisting of an invalid lady in a bath-chair, propelled by a shambling ancient (the commissary got him threepence an hour cheaper because of his weak legs), and attended by two young ladies of surpassing loveliness. The whole affair, made up as it was of such curious elements—youth and age, health and decrepitude, beauty and Jennings (which was the name of the ancient)—had quite an allegorical effect.

"By jingo!" cried Landon to his friend, who was marching beside him. "Eyes right, man, there's Ella and Miss Ray."

ON BOARD OF THE ARETHUSA.

INSTEAD of being wrinkled with crisp wavelets, the face of Father Thames is dimpled with a broad, heavy, unctuous smile. The water looks thick like oil, or rather like molten metal. A slight mist has been hanging about all day, and is only just clearing off from one of the

prettiest spots by the riverside. Greenwich, with its chalk pits and the green lawns of Ingress Abbey, gently woos the tourist. Stone Church, just above it, is worthy of a pilgrimage, as being the cause of the oldest and weakest joke connected with the Thames. This witticism was venerable in the time of Queen Elizabeth—a period by no means remarkable for the quality of its jokes—and was, perhaps, tottering to its grave when it was rescued and preserved by Reginald Scot, the author of *The Discourse of Witchcraft*. Perhaps the learned demonologist thought it funny, though it is difficult to imagine that any human being ever laughed at it. I do not repeat it in the hope that it will excite hilarity, but rather as a relic calculated to throw light upon the jests under which our stalwart forefathers contrived to exist. It belongs, I take it, to the species "quip," a description of joke, the art of making which is happily lost. "It is a common jest among the watermen of the Thames to show the parish church of Stone to the passengers, calling the same by the name of the 'Lanterne of Kent,' affirming, and that not untruly, that the said church is as light (meaning in weight, and not in brightness) at midnight as at noonday." Did the nuns of Dartford while away their time in exchanging such merry conceits as this, or were they entirely occupied by checking accounts with the great London fishmongers who took their salmon of them, and then proceeded to forestall and regrate the market at their pleasure? It was one of these stock-fishmongers, by the way, who demolished the hero of Dartford, Wat Tyler, who no doubt had poached many a salmon out of the Darent, before that pretty stream was tortured to serve the needs of paper and powder-mills. Yet the Darent has been more fortunate than Swanscombe Inlet, where Sweyn formed his winter camp, and the men of Kent, carrying green boughs, and led by Stigand, met the Conqueror—a story which opens a field of inquiry as to whether it was copied from the Birnam-wood legend, or whether Shakespeare, like a skilful theatrical manager, "adapted" the incident of the Norman conquest to his Northern tragedy. Other spots in the neighbourhood are well worthy of visit. There is the Brent, where the Dartford martyrs suffered fiery death, and in Swanscombe Wood is Clapernappers Hole, a cavern full of legends. But to none of these objects of interest

tend the pilgrims of to-day, some five or six hundred women and children—third-class passengers all of them—many with features sharpened by hard work and privation, others jovial enough in manner, and devoted to the care of big baskets and nubbly parcels. These poor people are clad in their best “bibs and tuckers,” and but for the baskets and bundles would wear a church-going look. Their object is the Arethusa, and her sister ship the Chichester, lying off in the river; for this, in the Arethusa tongue, is “mammy-day,” the first Monday in the quarter, when the boys on board of those excellent training-ships are allowed to see their relatives, if they have any. As displays of affection on the part of persons of ill-regulated mind almost invariably take the form of something to eat or drink, it is not to be wondered at that the poor folk swarming towards the Arethusa are loaded with pots of jam and pork-pies, apples, nuts, sausages, and other delicacies dear to the youthful palate. That poor woman dressed in black stuff of some sort, worn to exceeding glossiness, walking from the railway between a couple of hungry-looking girls, has surely done them and herself injustice by saving a few shillings to gratify the taste of Tom—on board of the Arethusa—who is certainly the best fed, best clothed, and best-cared-for member of his family. Master Tom has his solid half-pound of meat to his dinner, with store of potatoes and “soft tack”—they bake a sack of flour of the sort called “middlings” into bread every day on the Arethusa. He also has a good solid breakfast and tea, and, as compared with his wizened little sisters, is a fine specimen of humanity. But to them he appears in some sort as a hero, working out his passage to a still higher state, and deserving of sympathy during his period of probation. It is true that Tom’s life, on a training-ship, appears to wealthy visitors to be an eminently happy one. He is fed, clothed, taught the “three R’s,” and a trade, and when far enough advanced, is provided with employment; but his fond mother and loving sisters look not so much upon what Tom has, as upon what he has not. The delights of lounging about the streets, and ringing bells; of playing tipcat, to the terror of passers-by; of converting the pavement in cold weather into a gigantic slide, to the peril of the unwary; of laying orange-peel on flights of steps, and watching the effect upon hurried pedestrians;

of smoking, drinking, and swearing; in short, all the sweet consolations of a vagabond life, are lost to Tom, it is hoped, for ever; but his kith and kin, glad enough though they are to see him provided for, yet view him a little in the light of a martyr, to whom the joys of the gutter are taboo.

After the first kissing and hugging are over, mother and sisters “look over” Tom in a curious way. They think he has grown during the last three months, and, after subjecting him to a minute inspection, declare themselves satisfied. Then the baskets and bundles are opened; the cakes and pots of jam, the lusciously-browned sausages, which have burst from excess of richness, the oranges and the nuts, are drawn forth. While the family endearments are going on, not every face on board of the Arethusa wears a blithe look. Among the two hundred youngsters are not a few—nay, a great many—who have nobody “belonging to them.” These sorrowful ones look wistfully at the happy boys who have friends, and would like to know “how it feels” to have a mother’s hand resting gently on their heads, or a sister’s arm clasped round their necks. Delights like these are denied to the lonely Arethusans; but when sentiment is satisfied, and the healthy desire of youth, even when its emotions are most profound, for seed-cake and raspberry jam is made manifest, the boys with friends make the forlorn ones happy by inviting them to join their family circle. The orphan boys immediately become objects of interest to the matrons, who lavish jam and sympathy upon them till the requirements of both stomach and heart are amply filled. The Arethusa becomes the scene of a picnic till sundown, when the decks are cleared and the routine of life on board is resumed.

This discipline, which is maintained without any especial display of severity, appears remarkable when we consider who and what the boys on the training-ship are; whence, and from what company, they came hither. The raw material is first collected at the Refuge in Great Queen-street, Lincoln’s-inn-fields. From noisome alleys and foul garrets, from narrow courts reeking with moral and physical contamination, from filthy cellars dripping with slime and coated with the accumulated dirt of several lifetimes, from ash-heaps and dry arches, doorsteps and hedges, the waifs and strays of poor human nature drift to Great Queen-street. They come in all shapes—

not unfrequently in that sorrowful one of respectability utterly starved out and desperate, without roof or shelter, or bread to eat. Death, to those which I may style the comfortable classes, is an awful visitor, but people "above the world" can form but a slight idea of the fearful proportions he assumes when striking down the bread-winner who, on perhaps thirty or thirty-five shillings a week, has contrived to keep his wife and half-dozen of children decently. There is no insincerity about the grief at a funeral provided at the expense of the parish. There is a dreadful reality about it. The one prop of the tent is gone, and starvation sits grinning at the head of his coffin. Perhaps the eldest son or daughter is earning a little money, but what is that among so many little ones? This class of claimant is welcomed at the Refuge, and valued on board ship, for a reason presently to be set forth. He is perhaps able to read and write a little, and, at any rate, has some idea of religion and cleanliness. It is pleasant work to train him; but what of the next comer? He is lying outside on the step, waiting to be admitted. He and the gutter are much of a tint. The hue—the very material of the wretched rags which expose rather than cover his bony and grimy limbs—has been lost, or rather merged, in a general dirt colour. The matted locks, among which his claw-like fingers are busy, are knotted and clotted together with filth. And what a face peers, half-shyly, half-sulkily, and whole-hungrily from the top of that unsavoury heap lying at the door! The creature is a boy, but its face is old and haggard, with a strange look of cunning in the eyes, which rove incessantly from object to object, like those of a beast of prey. A sharp chin and lantern-jaws help to carry out the resemblance to a wild animal. He has tried many tricks, our unpromising friend, before coming, fairly starved out, to fling himself on the doorstep of the Refuge. The half-wild but wholly-corrupt young creature, who is perhaps—for he does not know—fourteen years old, has no legal guardians extant. No father or mother? "No, nor aunts, nor uncles, nor nuffin." Letter or line knows he never a one; nor the name of God, save to blaspheme. A hard case to work upon, but not beyond the scope of the Refuge founded by Lord Shaftesbury. The great chifffonier's basket in Queen-street was established to hold such rags of humanity as this. All are received—all. Filth and

ignorance, even crime, do not disqualify a candidate for admission to an institution which asks simply if he is "destitute." This is all the qualification required—to be absolutely poor and wretched.

Pending the purification of his mind, our young gutter-snipe must undergo a tremendous bodily cleansing. There is no little hair-cutting and scrubbing done at the Refuge, where, before a boy is sent afloat, the meaning of cleanliness is made clear to him—not by perpetual preaching and worry, but by the care taken, in the first instance, to make him clean, and then to keep him so. Here, already, at the Refuge, he is made to feel the weight of the most powerful engine of discipline wielded by the wise and merciful rulers of the entire institution. This is public opinion. On board the ship herself this instrument almost supplies the wants of the officers, and in a smaller degree, of course, is felt among the newly-caught boys in Queen-street. But even there it exercises remarkable power. The last arrival finds himself among a large number of boys, the majority of whom have already been taught the elements of cleanliness and order, and he no more dare act or talk filthily than he dare jump out of the window. In the early days of the Chichester, the boys played a hundred pranks, and stole right and left; but in time these instincts were repressed, and a healthy public opinion established. There is now little trouble with them at the Refuge, and less on board ship. The establishment in Queen-street is very neatly kept, the whole of the housework being performed by the boys themselves. Mrs. Carr, the matron, tells me that she has only one servant, the boys having developed great talent for housework, which they regard as good fun. Housework over, floors scoured, beds made, and the cooking squad set to work, the day is equally divided between school and workshop—three hours to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and three hours to basket-making, tailoring, or shoe-making. It is pleasant to watch the younger boys making "punnets," as they are called in Covent-garden. The bigger ones split the wood into the strips required, and then the little fellows plait the circular pieces which form the groundwork of the "punnet," bent up and shaped afterwards round a block. They also take kindly to tailoring and shoe-making. They make all the clothes worn by the four hundred on board of the

two training-ships, as well as the large quantities wanted for the Refuge itself. And they appear to enjoy this part of the day's work far more than the school hours—a period, to the genuine street boy, of unmitigated agony.

From the Refuge, the boys who like the sea are drafted on to ships at Greenwich. Formerly it was considered inexpedient to extend the benefits of the institution for longer than one year to each person, but this period has recently been doubled, as it was found difficult to obtain employment at sea for boys under fourteen or fifteen years of age. In the two years during which the boys are taken care of they are not only taught cleanliness, godliness, and spelling, but are put through a course of practical seamanship. A few months make a great alteration in their appearance. It is marvellous to those who love to talk of facial angles, high and low types, and the rest of it, to mark the singular change which comes over the starved savage of our streets, with a few months of good food and proper care. The hollow, cunning eyes put on a brighter and franker look, the shifty "round-the-corner" glance having died out, under circumstances which do not require the "tail of the eye" to be always on the look-out for a policeman. The cheekbones no longer project so far beyond the sunken eyes and hollow cheeks. The pointed chin, which once gave a peculiarly "gallows" finish to the whole physiognomy, has disappeared under a generous diet of beef and pudding. It would be absurd to claim for the boys of the Arethusa and Chichester a pre-eminence for beauty over those of other seminaries, but in simple fairness they must be classed a "good average lot." As might be expected, a low receding forehead, or a flat-topped cranium, may be found here and there, but the proportion of disquieting heads is not very great. Perhaps the chubby, bullet-headed, "cob-like" boy may be taken as the prevailing type of the Arethusan, but there are not wanting among them the lads with as fine and clear-cut features as could be found at any one of our great public schools.

On regular working-days the boys begin early, for there is much holy-stoning and cleaning of all kinds to be done before breakfast. This meal and prayers over, the boys fall into their several classes and divisions, each under a competent instructor. Seamanship is a pretty comprehensive

term, including nearly all the arts of construction. Several smart lads are taking a lesson in "pulling;" and very well they pull together. Others are engaged in a compass class; others again are hard at work, trying to comprehend the use of the lights, which at night enable seamen to observe the rule of the road. Splicing, bending, and knotting are indispensable parts of a seaman's education, and are, it is almost needless to say, very popular among the boys. Sailmaking is another study attentively pursued on board of the Arethusa. It is almost unnecessary to mention that the boys are regularly instructed in the various kinds of drill practised on board of her Majesty's ships, and taught to man the yards and perform other duties aloft in shipshape style. The main difficulty experienced by those admirable officers, Captain Walter of the Arethusa, and Captain Boxer of the Chichester, is not to get their boys aloft, but to get them down again. The masts and yards present an invincible attraction, and the tendency to overrate strength and activity is so great, that nets are carefully spread to catch the over-venturesome. Mistakes as to distance and miscalculations of strength, rare among the older boys, are common among the recent arrivals, who have not had sufficient time to recover from the effect of months, or perhaps years, of exposure and starvation. At flood-tide there is bathing in a great floating-bath; there are also cooking squads to be told off; there are lamps to be trimmed and brass-work to be polished; and a few boys whose "good conduct" status is very high indeed, are allowed to assist the baker and the carpenter. At dinner-time the boys find the number of their mess easily enough, and, after grace, fall on to an excellent meal—mainly of fresh meat, vegetables, and bread, but varied on two days a week with regular sailors' fare. Thus, on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, dinner is composed of roast or baked fresh meat, vegetables and bread; Wednesday and Friday are sea-pie days; and on Tuesday and Thursday the good old legitimate pea-soup and salt pork are served up. After dinner a canvas screen is suspended between the upper decks, and a portion of the space is thus cut off for a school-room. Then the minds, which have been pleasantly exercised during the morning in grappling with the mysteries of tackle—the various "hitches" and "bends" with which mariners are acquainted—are now

turned to the more tedious tasks imposed by the schoolmaster, whose task is by no means lightened by the very miscellaneous character of his pupils. A few are not ill-taught; others know very little; but from forty to fifty per cent. can neither read nor write. Very little knowledge of human nature will tell us that the schoolmaster's berth is not the easiest in the ship. The mind of a boy of fourteen, trained only in the hard school of the streets, has developed thoroughly only one faculty—vigilance—the peculiar property of the savage. Hence, if he is told to look out and steer this way or that way, or to make a knot in a peculiar fashion, he does fairly well, for his perceptive powers are called into action, and there is the boat, or the piece of rope, before him. Above all, there is something to be done. But when memory and reflection are required, the vigilant young savage is at a loss. In arithmetic, more especially, is this truth made manifest. It would seem easier to teach many of these boys to make a desk than to add up the cost of the materials for it. The field of study, however, is wide enough to give every boy a chance of passing in several of the nineteen subjects set before him. A record of the actual status of every student is kept upon a "progress board," ruled and divided into hollow squares, each of which is filled up with a cube as he passes in that particular subject. Thus the new chum sees on the "progress board" nineteen hollow spaces, and knows that the sooner he can fill up a proper proportion of them the sooner will he be "passed ready for sea." It is not pretended, that a couple of years on board of the *Arethusa* will make a London street-boy into an able seaman; but this much is certain, that the agents at the docks, who are entrusted with the care of finding ships for the youngsters, experience no great difficulty in placing them. It has, by degrees, oozed out that the boys from the training-ships are far smarter and better "in hand" than chance comers, and captains are, therefore, glad to have them. While at the docks awaiting employment, they are housed and taken care of by the agent, to the end that they may be shipped, without meeting any opportunity of relapsing into vagrant habits. The return of certificates made up to the end of August, now hanging up on board the *Chichester*, proclaims the success with which good conduct can be taught to those who, many of them, had never quite understood what it was. The certificates are granted by the boys'

masters at the close of a voyage, and indicate their "ability" and "conduct" thus:

	Preferred	Good.	making	no return.
Ability . . .	1,769	164	33	
Conduct . . .	1,800	139	27	

It is pleasant to contemplate such a record as this, and still more pleasant to meet the old *Arethusans* and old *Chichesters*, when they return from a voyage to pay a visit to their old commander. Not a little proud, either, are they of the money they bring home to their mothers, if they have any.

Judging from "mammy" day and other days, the boys, during their training, do not feel any lack of amusement. For those of an active body there is plenty of rowing, going aloft, and swimming, together with a walk or a game of cricket ashore now and then; while for those of a studious turn of mind, there is reading enough, and to spare. From a well-selected library of amusing as well as serious books, batches of literature are served out to the various messes, to the end that the boys may always have access to reading of some kind. Besides reading and school-teaching, there are lectures on various subjects, readings from the poets, and so forth, organised in the lecture-theatre, down deep in the ship. When lighted up by oil-lamps, the spacious room looks bright and pleasant enough, and the audience is sure to prove appreciative. The drama has its votaries too, and sundry enterprising boys give little performances of their own. The pieces presented are of a sensational character, and are partly new and "original" works and partly "adaptations" from plays witnessed by the boys, while they were yet running loose upon town; or during the short holidays occasionally allowed to those whose behaviour has been especially good. Judged by these curious performances, the boyish mind is singularly unretentive of the softer dramatic episodes, but clings fondly to the startling and the horrible. In one of the *Chichester* dramas figure a villain, a thief, two detectives—one Welsh—and a phantom. Any depression, occasioned by the mournful nature of the story, is supposed to be relieved by clog-dancing and singing between the acts. Singing is much encouraged by the schoolmaster of the *Arethusa*, whose boys lift up their voices with a will when he sits down to the harmonium, and accompanies them in *The Sailor's Evening*

Hymn, The Sea is England's Glory, and A Fire Brigade Chorus. Just as the latter melody comes to an end, there is wild clanging on the ship's bell; and the singers spring to their feet and fly in every direction. Up and down they rush, and presently, in less than a minute and a half, water is pouring out of the hose, and boys are scampering in and around with fire-annihilators. The sharp strokes on the bell called the boys to fire-quarters—a duty in which they are frequently exercised, in the hope that the sister ships at Greenhithe may, in the event of mishap, escape the fate of the old Warspite and the Goliath.

FUNERAL FARCES.

THE present generation, like every generation before it, is reproached with contemning the simpler ways of its fathers and mothers. Preachers, clerical and lay, never tire of telling us we work less steadily, spend more profusely, dress more outrageously, and indulge in extravagances that would have horrified our industrious, thrifty, quiet-going, sensibly-attired progenitors. The libel may be allowed to pass unchallenged, for we know very well that, by-and-by, we shall be held up as exemplars to the naughty ones filling our places. But, unless they are conviction-proof, the somewhat too eager detractors of the men and women of their own time must confess that in one respect, at least, we have bettered the instructions of our forefathers, and bury our dead with less pomp and parade than they cared to do. Lyings-in-state, even in the cases of people of note, are rarely heard of nowadays; and no stroller about the skirts of the City runs any chance of being stopped, like "T" of the Connoisseur, by a grand procession of six-horsed coaches, attended by flambeaux and black attendants, conveying the corpse of a cheesemonger, "in indifferent circumstances," after a week's lying-in-state in Thames-street, to be deposited with his ancestors in Whitechapel burying-ground.

The defunct cheesemonger was in no way responsible for the posthumous respect paid to him; that was the outcome of his disconsolate relict's conviction of what was due to the honour of her family. Very few people trouble themselves about the ordering of their own obsequies. Those who do so are mostly whimsical folks anxious to embrace the last opportunity

of displaying their singularity, or proclaiming their contempt for ordinary usages. Some, on the principle that

When a man's dead
There's no more to be said,

would have earth committed to earth as unceremoniously as possible, without what a Frenchwoman called "superfluous formalities, only of service to those who make money by them." The lady's distaste for the superfluous did not prevent her directing the erection of a handsome tomb, inscribed, "Next to the misfortune of existing, is the greater one of belonging to the human race!" A dame, so dissatisfied with the arrangements of this world, must have been as glad to leave it, as the old gentleman who left a bequest to a certain parish, to ensure the tolling of the church bell upon the anniversary of his wedding-day, and the ringing of a merry peal, once a year, in commemoration of his happy release from domestic thraldom.

A worthy army surgeon desired those who saw him to his grave to wear anything but black, and to carry white flowers in their button-holes, as he wished the ceremony to be considered more an occasion for rejoicing than one for mourning. A yet more merry-minded man was a so-called "misanthrope," who died at Mont Gaillard in 1822. He left instructions that all the musicians in the place were to be invited to his funeral, to lighten the march to the churchyard by playing minuets, waltzes, and hunting-tunes. His house and the church were to be decorated with evergreens and flowers in honour of the event, and his property was to go to the relative who laughed the heartiest, during the celebration of the burial-rites. Another eccentric Frenchman, who had spent his life in collecting gems and coins, wished his obsequies to be performed with every accompaniment calculated to inspire mirthful feelings. His body was to be wrapped in tanned pigskin, and buried coffinless in a standing position upon a pile of charcoal. The "followers" were to carry laurel branches, and, upon their return from the church, the doors of his treasure-chamber were to be thrown open to all comers, that they might help themselves to its contents at discretion. His behests were hardly likely to be obeyed; for, in anticipation of the general scramble, before the collector's breath was out of his body, his servants decamped with everything that was portable. A Mr. Zimmerman, who departed this life in 1840, and who must surely

have been a descendant of the author of *The Pleasures of Solitude*, was for having things done in a quiet sort of way. No tolling of the dreadful bell; no customary suits of solemn black for him. He expressly forbade anyone attending his corpse to its last resting-place; but omitted to suggest any plan of getting it there without infringing his instructions, which was the more inexcusable, since he threatened, if his wishes were not fulfilled to the letter, he would come back again—"if he could." The afterthought was a wise one; as Touchstone says, there is much virtue in "if."

Mr. Z. would never have hoarded a crooked guinea, as the provident lumber trooper did, to enable his old comrades to make themselves comfortable with punch and pipes on the day of his interment; an example of self-denying saving that would have met the approval of the dyer, who enjoined his mourning friends to be sure and halt at Westminster, to regale themselves with a gallon of porter, repeating the refreshing performance at the Jolly Sawyers, in Lambeth-walk, and winding up by cracking a bottle of gin over his grave ere they took leave of him. Clegg, the conjurer, a blithe Rochdale lad, specially prohibited weeping or wailing at his funeral, which, provided he escaped the gallows, and died a natural death, was to be festively celebrated by sixty of his best acquaintance, men or women in the habit of wearing white aprons or white caps being ineligible. Upon entering the house each guest was to receive a sprig of holly, gorse, or rosemary, and a spiced cake; and, as soon as all had gathered round the bed bearing the coffined conjurer, attired in his "roast-meat clothes," jugs of jolly good ale and old were to be handed about, and all hands to give themselves up to enjoyment for a couple of hours. At the expiration of that time, gill bumpers were to be passed round, while five fiddlers plied their bows upon "Britons, strike home!" When every Jack had disposed of his gill, the funeral procession was to be formed; those who preferred going on horseback might do so, conditionally, upon their riding, as Hudibras rode to the stocks, face to tail, the rear being brought up by the officiating parson, mounted on a donkey—the fiddlers heading the procession, and playing their best until the graveyard was reached. Having seen their friend's remains deposited "hard by the huge ruins" of an

old crony, the company were to make tracks for the conjurer's favourite ale-house, and take their ease there until the score amounted to thirty shillings. Clegg had an antipathy to other things beside white caps and aprons, for he forbade any one attending his last entertainment to indulge in smoking or snuffing. Dame Margaret Thompson, who lived and died in Boyle-street, in the days of Queen Anne, was of a different way of thinking. She had never found any flowers so gratifying to her sense of smell as good Scotch snuff, and therefore desired her old servant, Sarah, to see that her body was covered with it before the coffin-lid was screwed down. She was also to strew the threshold with two bushels of snuff preparatory to her dead mistress being carried across it by six of the greatest snuff-takers to be found in the parish, and to secure the same number of old maids for pall-bearers, and supply them with boxes of snuff for use on the road; Sarah herself, walking before the coffin, and distributing "every twenty yards, a large handful of Scotch snuff to the ground and upon the ground," while the clergyman was expected to take a certain quantity of the same, not exceeding a pound, as he walked in the procession—his fee of four pounds depending upon his carrying out the dame's whim in that respect.

John Oliver, a jolly Sussex miller, had a tomb built for himself near his mill at Hightown-hill, thirty years before he was ready to occupy it. When he came to that pass, his body was put into a white coffin, and borne to its long-prepared lodging by eight men clad in white; the burial service being read by a girl of twelve, who afterwards preached a sermon to the congregation of curiosity-mongers, some two thousand strong. Scantier ceremony satisfied Mr. Fisher Dilke, a son-in-law of the regicide judge, Sir Peter Wentworth, when he came to bury his wife. This economical gentleman had his spouse's coffin made by a carpenter, from wood stripped from his barn wall; bargained with the clerk to make a grave in the churchyard for a groat; and got eight of his neighbours to act as bearers. Before they took up their burden, the bereaved man treated them to a reading from Job, a bottle of claret, and three twopenny cakes. The poor lady's friends were conspicuous by their absence, the widower being chief and only mourner. No clergyman waited the coming of her

corpse, Mr. Dilke officiating himself—his service beginning and ending with, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Had not his parsimony been notorious, the burial of his better-half with such maimed rites might have been attributed to a republican's contempt for the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, although republicans of a Spartan type are rarely found outside philosophical disquisitions. One April day, in the present year of grace, thousands of New Yorkers poured into the great hall of a dry-goods merchant's marble mansion, to see the dead millionaire reclining upon a mattress covered with white tufted satin, in a casket of oak—"a perfect work of art"—covered with the finest black Lyons velvet, trimmed with gold bullion fringe. The lid was covered with white satin, in the form "of gathered sun-rays, studded with gold." The coffin—no, casket—plate was of solid silver, the screws of gold, the knobs of silver washed with gold, and the handles plated with the same metal. This precious casket was not laid upon trestles, but upon a huge pyramid of roses, camellias, carnations, tuberoses, lilies of the valley, cape jasmine and violets, bordered with smilax. At its head rose a floral emblem six feet high; at its foot was another, representing a broken column. On one side was a standing star of camellias, roses, lilies, and hyacinths; on the other a standing harp of the same fragrant materials. The exhibition over, the casket was enclosed in a box of red cedar, and placed in an open hearse, with glass sides, the black curtains of which, fringed with gold, drooped in graceful folds. Behind the hearse came sixty coaches, their drivers provided with silk gloves and black hats; and behind a long procession of followers on foot, marshalled by ushers, "selected from the stores of the deceased." The interior of the church was as cheerful as flowers and green leaves could make it. At the right of the pulpit stood a cross, fourteen feet in height, formed of roses and smilax, surmounted by a dove, bearing a violet wreath in its bill; at the left was a pillar, surmounted by a crown, two harps of calla lilies, a smaller pillar wreathed with violets, and a star rising out of sago-palm leaves. The object of this floral homage was laid upon a catafalque of flowers, while the service was performed by a right re-

verend bishop, assisted by a glee club and sundry professional singers; then the organ played a funeral march, and the casket was carried down the centre aisle into the churchyard, and solemnly deposited in the family vault.

Very different notions as to the fittest mode of honouring the memory of a "self-made man" were held by the friends of old Bag o' Grains, a golden dustman of Stepney, who died some fifty years ago. This worthy, a parish foundling, from driving a dust-cart had risen to be a dust-contractor, and made a heap of money. His funeral procession was led off by twelve boys bearing links, and as many men carrying whips and shovels reversed; then came his favourite horse, decorated with cloth spatterdashes, followed by a cart covered with black baize, in which lay the body in a handsome coffin, surmounted by a huge plume of white feathers; the pall borne by a dozen brickmakers and dustmen, clad in white flannel jackets and new leather breeches; and the rear brought up by carts filled with cinder-sifters, dustmen, chimney-sweeps, and mourners of like degree.

An old proverb says there can be no play without a fool in it. A corpse should be more indispensable to a funeral than a fool to a play; nevertheless, there have been funerals without one. Weary of making watches that would not go, Charles the Fifth took to mortifying his flesh and making himself miserable generally, until he brought himself to such a melancholy pass, that nothing would do but he must celebrate his own obsequies, before he was ready to take his proper part in them. No opposition was offered to the indulging of his whim: although Charles was only an ex-monarch, his will was law in the little domain he ruled in his retirement. Accordingly a tomb was erected in the monastery chapel; a coffin made; and all the necessary "properties" for the performance provided. At the time appointed, the monks and the imperial domestics, carrying black tapers, fell in behind the coffin and the shroud-enwrapped hero of the strange comedy; and all, making believe to the best of their ability, marched with solemn faces and slow steps to the chapel; where Charles, resigning his part of chief mourner, was laid in the coffin to listen to the chanting of his own requiem, and join audibly in the prayer for the repose of his yet unparted soul. Then the coffin and its

tenant were deposited in the tomb, and the assistants at this odd ceremony retired, carefully closing the chapel doors as they departed. When he was tired of his solitary confinement, Charles arose and returned to his apartments, to be seized the next day with a fever which quickly rendered a real funeral necessary—a funeral celebrated in much more regal fashion than the mock one that preceded it. Charles the Fifth's ill-ending farce was imitated by a burgher of Ghent. For his story we are indebted to a correspondent of Notes and Queries, who disinterred it from a journal kept by an officer in Marlborough's army, who made one of the garrison of the castle of Ghent after the Peace of Utrecht. When the authorities of Ghent were made aware that they would have to find accommodation for the allied army, they were puzzled to know how it was to be done, until a poor button-maker named Farrazine offered to find quarters for any number of men at a cost of a penny a man. His offer was accepted, and he contrived to execute his part of the bargain to everybody's satisfaction, and made a fortune out of it too. With wealth came ambition, and he did not rest till the rank of gentleman was accorded to him, when he set up his coach, put his servants into livery, and held his own with the best citizens of Ghent. Even then he was not happy. He took it into his head to build himself a tomb in the church of the Capuchin Friars, a privilege for which the fraternity made him pay handsomely. "When the monument was finished it far excelled anything in Ghent. He then gave the friars another handsome present to go in procession from his house before his coffin, which was sumptuously adorned with escutcheons, carried by four of the novices, himself following as chief mourner, and a crowd of people following him; and, indeed, it was a most ridiculous sight to see the sycophants singing their anthems before that foolish man's coffin; and when they had deposited the coffin in the monument, where it was to remain till his death, at which time they were to take it out of the monument, and return with it to his house in the same manner they carried it thither, and then return back with his corpse to the monument. But, behold, Farrazine died soon after, who, having not left so large a legacy for praying his soul out of purgatory as the friars expected, though he had paid them well for everything, yet, thinking it not sufficient, these ungrateful wretches pulled

down his monument, threw it and his coffin out of the church, nor would they say one mass for his soul. So, after all the money he had laid out for a pompous funeral, poor Farrazine was privately buried in the churchyard of a remote chapel. He left one prodigal son, who lived to spend all, and at last died in gaol."

On the 1st of December, 1865, a foreigner called at the office of the Plaistow registrar, and registered the death of Vital Douat, producing a medical certificate showing that that person had died, upon the 29th of November, of aneurism of the heart. The same morning the sexton of the Roman Catholic cemetery at Low Leyton received instructions to get a grave ready by the ensuing Sunday. In the afternoon, a man, calling himself Monsieur Rubini, bought a ready-made coffin at an undertaker's in the Mile-end-road, and ordered the handles to be removed from the sides to the ends, and an extra thick leaden lining to be put to it. On the Sunday he appeared again, called in two labourers who were passing by the shop, and engaged them to carry his purchase to the Shoreditch railway-station, where he and it were booked for Leytonstone. Upon getting there he hired a cart, put himself and the coffin in it, and was driven to St. Patrick's Cemetery, where the coffin was taken into the chapel, the service read over it, and it was consigned to the earth. A few weeks afterwards Madam Douat sent in a claim to an insurance office in Paris for the sum of a hundred thousand francs, due to her in consequence of the death of her husband in England. The officials, aware that M. Douat was a fugitive fraudulent bankrupt, put the applicant off, and sent across the Channel to have the matter inquired into by the gentlemen of Scotland Yard. An order was obtained for the exhumation of the body of Vital Douat, and the coffin was taken up, and of course no body was found therein. Douat had registered his own death, bought his own coffin, and followed it to the grave. By the time all this was ascertained, the rogue had taken refuge in America; but after awhile he ventured upon a trip to Antwerp, where he was arrested and delivered to the French authorities.

An old couple living in a village not far from Berlin, as many provident souls have done, anticipated a certain want by purchasing a pair of coffins, keeping the cheerful reminders in a stable, to serve as

cupboards for the storing of baked fruits and other winter necessities. At last the old man died, and his eldest son, a soldier quartered at Berlin, was summoned home to the funeral. The widow emptied one of the coffins of its contents to make room for the corpse, filling the other with the ejected comestibles. The day after the funeral the soldier had to return to his duty. The dame went to fetch him some fruit, and on opening the solitary coffin was startled and confounded at beholding her dead husband. Somebody had blundered, and the coffinful of good things had been solemnly put under the turf, and everything had to be done over again!

WITH THE BLOOM OFF.

A SUGGESTION. IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"THE poetry of life is over, and its prose begins from to-day," my husband of a month's standing says to me, quite cheerfully, as we enter the home in which we are to begin our married life.

In the innermost recesses of my heart I feel rather disposed to cavil at this statement. Ours has been a marriage of affection. Our courtship has been, he has often declared, "a poem!" According to my idea, the romance of life is just beginning for us. But I content myself with thinking this, for Archie does not like me to contravert his opinions.

At starting, I will confess that I am somewhat of the order which the Scotch denominate feckless; that is to say, I am not wilfully extravagant in taste or expenditure. Nevertheless money always goes from me quickly; and when it and I are parted, all the account I can offer of the separation is:

Alas! I know not how it went,
I knew not it was going.

Neither am I untidy exactly; still, small articles of various kinds, that are necessary to my every-day existence, have a habit of mislaying themselves, and of being found, after long and weary search, in places that have no manner of congruity with them. Further, I am not wanting in energy of a certain sort, as the circumstances of my life will show; for I have supported myself by writing incessantly ever since I was eighteen, and I can follow the hounds, without even thinking of fatigue, from morning till night. But I grow languid whenever I am dull or bored, and I can never exert myself to scold a servant. However, dear Archie knew and admired

these characteristics of mine before we married; and though the chaos that reigned in my trunks exercised his spirit sometimes when we were travelling, the sole reproof he offered was to put them neat for me—and that was a form of reproof that I rather liked. But in spite of this gentle experience, my heart sinks a little as Archie's inauguration speech falls upon my ears.

"I must go into harness regularly tomorrow," he says, as he looks at the mass of correspondence that has accumulated during his absence. "We must breakfast invariably at half-past eight, you know. I walk up to my office to keep myself in health, and to save 'bus fares. By-the-way, Kitty dear, what system did you pursue in your housekeeping before you married? Everything was always excessively nice; it was one of the things that impressed me favourably with you from the first. You were always exquisitely dressed, and your ménage was perfect."

"Mamma managed everything while she could," I stammered, "and when she died—well, things went on, you know."

"That is to say you took the reins into your own hands," he says, admiringly. "I've always contended that a literary woman can, if she pleases, superintend every domestic detail, just as though she didn't spend seven or eight hours a day in writing, and now my own wife proves to me that my theory is correct. Do you pay ready money for everything, or run weekly bills?"

I try to think, in order that I may make him a clear and satisfactory statement. This is all I can recall as to my past manner of managing money matters: "I gave money to the servants when they wanted it," I say, "and they spent it, of course, to the best advantage."

"You checked the books, Kitty?" he says gravely.

"Looked at them, do you mean, to see how many loaves of bread, and pints of milk, and pounds of meat we had had for the last three months? No, no, Archie! If I had done that—other women declare that it takes all their time to keep house properly—when should I have written, and made the money by which we lived?"

"If you had a proper sense of order (which you can easily acquire) you would see to all your household affairs early in the morning, and get to your writing afterwards; it's merely a matter of method."

"Then I should go to my work tired," I say.

"Nonsense! Looking after their houses doesn't tire other women."

"Do the other women you speak of go and write novels?" I ask speciously, and a light scowl settles on my husband's brow, as he answers:

"You always had time for riding, and dancing; and, permit me to observe, that you wasted a great deal of it in making yourself generally agreeable."

"The riding gave me health and strength for my work," I argue; "the dancing gave me pleasure; and the making myself agreeable was a social obligation."

"Well, you'll have to be careful, and economical, and to look after things yourself," he says, quietly. Then he proceeds to wonder why a cousin of mine, who has superintended the preparations for our welcome home, has committed the enormity of suffering wax candles to be placed in the bed-room candlesticks. As I listen to him I quite agree with him—the poetry of life is over, and the reading of rather a severe piece of prose has commenced.

This cousin, Marian Latrobe, has been a favourite friend of mine, during nearly all the days of my unmarried life. She will be a pleasant element in our home, I tell myself; for Archie is away nearly all day, and when I leave my desk, at one o'clock, I like to have someone with whom to saunter from room to room, someone to help me water the flowers, and to speak to about the news of the day. She is bright, lively, good-looking, and not one of those tiresome girls, who affect to believe that newly-married people always wish to be alone. I felt, when I invited her to be our guest immediately on our return, that I should be pleasing Archie as well as myself. It troubles me slightly, therefore, when Archie girds against those candles. It seems very ungrateful to Marian, after all the trouble she has taken.

But somehow or other it is borne in upon me, when we have been home two or three weeks, that Archie is getting tired of something in his new life, with which he does not exactly like to find fault, but which does not exactly please him nevertheless. "Can it be with me?" I question for an idle moment; and, little vain as I am, I do not distrust the answer my heart gives: it is not with me.

"Don't Marian's people begin to want her home again?" Archie says to me one morning, walking in from his dressing-

room, and affecting to be deeply occupied in contemplating his own face in my glass.

"Want her home! I hope not yet," I reply, quickly. "What should I do without her while you're away? Besides, she saves me a lot of trouble—she sees that I have luncheon, and orders dinner, and—"

"Takes a confounded lot of liberties altogether," he interrupts testily. "The truth is, Kitty, I am tired of seeing the girl at every turn of my home life; she's as much mistress of the house as you are, and I don't like it."

He wheels round from the glass as he speaks, and unmistakably he does "not like it." I shiver with the presentiment that the evil days are coming upon me—that I am going to be found fault with by one against whose fault-finding I shall have no appeal. I gulp down the sob that rises in my throat at the recollection of the life-long impunity from blame, of the lightest order, which I have enjoyed. I stifle the regret that strives to make itself felt for my lost liberty. I remind myself of the vows I have so recently made to honour and obey him; and, though I don't feel in the least inclined to do the latter, I say quite cheerfully:

"As you will, Archie; I'll give Marian the slightest hint in the world to go, and she will be sure to take it. She has such tact—we Latrobes are famous for it, in fact. So that question's settled, isn't it?"

"You are a sweet-tempered darling!" he says, admiringly; and I refrain from telling him that my amiable acquiescence, on this occasion, proceeds quite as much from my dislike to having a crumple in my own rose-leaf, as from my desire to please him. The fact is, we Latrobes have another strongly-marked characteristic: we are willing to fight to the death when action is forced upon us, but we are strongly averse from anything like petty warfare, and from aught that partakes of the nature of fuss to any degree.

My first domestic difficulty disturbs me considerably for awhile. Archie goes away to his office in a most balmy mood; but Marian remains with me—to be told, before he comes home to dinner, that she is not wanted here any more! The task that is before me is a hateful one. Fond as I am of my husband, I allow myself to think him inconsiderate—to say nothing more—and I give a very affectionate back-thought to those days when I reigned, and reigned alone, in the pretty home, the comforts of

which all the friends I was fond of were free to enjoy, as much as I did myself.

Marian is especially fascinating to me to-day. Unconsciously she makes herself more agreeable—I may say more necessary—to me than she has ever been before. She goes out early, and buys a lot of flowers and ferns for me to arrange when I leave off writing. She recalls to her memory a wonderful way of dressing artichokes which she learnt in France, and which she thinks Archie will like. She discovers, in one of the daily papers, an excellent review of a recently-published novel of mine. She turns an unpleasant structure, that my milliner has just sent home, into a graceful and charming bonnet. And when she has done all these things, the time is ripe for me to tell her that we are tired of her, and inhospitably anxious for her departure!

She comes into my room, where I am dressing for dinner, and momentarily expecting Archie's return. This has always been a habit of hers, and I have encouraged it; for we amuse each other, and she likes to wait upon me in trifles, and I like to be waited upon in everything. It occurs to me now, for the first time, that perhaps this habit may not have been quite so pleasing to Archie; for it closes the door between his room and mine, and prevents his seeing me, as a rule, till we all three sit down to dinner. But I cannot change this custom now, and so I say:

"I have been Mrs. Tyrrell a long time now, yet every now and then I feel just as if I were Kitty Latrobe still."

"Do you really now?" Marian rejoins. "I rather wonder at that; Archie is a very nice fellow, but I don't think that he ever forgets, for a moment, that you're Mrs. Tyrrell, and not Kitty Latrobe still."

"He's desperately fond of me," I say, rapidly. "He's never so happy as when he is with me—"

"Alone!" she interrupts, laughing. "That's just it, Kitty dear. Don't distress yourself about what I am going to say: Archie didn't marry us both, you know, and I see that, sometimes when he comes down to dinner, he is so perplexed as to which is his wife that he finds it very difficult to be barely civil to either of us. I don't think that I shall stand upon the order of my going, but I shall go in a day or two. You very seldom take a horse on the curb yourself, do you, Kitty?"

"I don't think I would take even a donkey on the curb," I laugh; and she

shrugs her pretty shoulders, and says, as she saunters from the room:

"Let us hope Archie has a light hand, for he is going to take you on the curb pretty sharply—I see that plainly enough, Kitty; however, I say nothing." And having said enough to make me unhappy, Marian leaves me to my own reflections until Archie comes in to dress.

Knowing that I have, at the cost of a considerable amount of embarrassment to myself, solved the difficulty of Marian's departure for him, I am a little disappointed at the air of vexation and annoyance which surrounds him like an atmosphere. To the shame of my selfishness be it said, that my own home-trouble is so paramount with me, that I cannot put it in the background and silently sympathise with my husband. I am so full of the subject of Marian's surrender of her own position—to say nothing of her satire on mine—that I am utterly incapable of making the attempt to "soothe him with my finer fancies." On the contrary, I bunglingly cause my own grievances to advance with the words:

"Just stay and hear about Marian, Archie; it has been so disagreeable to settle it; but it is all settled, and she is going in a day or two."

"Oh, never mind about Marian!" he says, wearily. "I have more important things to think about."

"You made rather a point of her visit coming to an end very soon, this morning," I say rather pettishly, "and now that I have had the mortification of my cousin seeing that I am not quite mistress of my own house, you seem to think it a trivial affair altogether. You are inconsistent, Archie!"

"That girl is a positive nuisance!" Archie says, irritably turning away into his own dressing-room; and I go down and rejoin Marian in the drawing-room, with a feeling of disgust and chagrin reigning in my heart.

We are very calm and peaceful for a few weeks after Marian's departure; for my husband perceives that I am making strenuous efforts to do the whole duty of woman as housewife. I institute a set of admirable rules and regulations respecting the working of the house. On fine mornings I make a little round among our tradespeople, and succeed in saving about fourpence on the butcher's weekly bill. This feat of valour and skill—for it has required a vast outlay of both qualities

—elevates me in my own opinion prodigiously, and I begin to nourish the feeling that we shall live very comfortably on the income I save by my personal supervision. Not having a strong physique, I find, when I have fulfilled these matutinal obligations, that I am utterly incapable of making any mental effort. It is in vain that I spread the virgin page before me, and take the hitherto facile pen in my hand. The page remains white and unwritten still, the pen refuses to run; and at the end of a few weeks—when Archie asks me what money is due to me for fugitive work—I have to tell him that there is nothing due to me, for that I "have been unable to concentrate myself sufficiently lately, to do even fugitive work." In fact, I have proved myself a very good housekeeper to him, but I have also proved to myself that I lack the power to give my imagination fair play, while I am in the midst of the performance of laboriously prosaic details.

Time passes, and we seem to prosper; for I am working again in my own groove, and leaving my household to partake freely of the delights of that liberty which is so dear to the heart of the British domestic, and which is so sure to degenerate into license when it is unchecked by the eye and hand of the mistress. We seem to prosper, but I know that the prosperity is a sham, built upon a system of such deceit as I should have scorned in the old days, before my unhappy habit of averting the present evil had grown into the strong, cowardly determination to keep a fair surface seeming at any price. I know that we are living beyond our means. I know that my health is failing—partly from physical cares, and partly from the state of tension in which my nerves are kept. I know that the day of reckoning must come; and there are times when I lay my weary head on the pillow, and pray, either that I may be made good enough to die and die at once, or that I may be given grace to face the future, and make a clean breast of the course of folly which my husband has frightened me into pursuing.

For it has come to this: Archie is good, kind, clever, and dearly devoted to me; but he does not understand that a certain habit he has of diving into details—of pettily interfering in petty things, and of complaining about trifles that a man ought never to see—is corroding my life away, and alienating my confidence in him. I shrink so pitifully from the sight of the

well-known scowl, from the sound of the carping, petulant complaint, when the question of our exchequer is raised, that I pile up misery for myself in the future by selling out portions of my small capital unknown to Archie, wherewith to relieve our necessities in the present. But though the money is essentially my own—though I have worked for it, and shall work even harder to replace it—I feel as if a brand of guilt were on my brow, as it slips through my fingers in liquidation of the debts we have mutually incurred.

By the time matters have come to this climax, little children are springing up around me, making fertile what would otherwise be the desert of my life. These involve a new set of cares and responsibilities, of exercises in self-abnegation, and futile endeavours to make the already overstrained two ends meet. By this time, also, our families on either side have ebbed away from us considerably. Archie's people "have no patience" with me, for not reduplicating again and again an unexpected success which I once made, and which was the cause of my putting money in my purse to a considerable extent. And my people, with equal injustice, have no patience with Archie, because he is not jerked into a good and remunerative position out of the official course.

Meantime the cost of living is increasing daily. Rent is going up in every part of town in which sanitary considerations will permit one to dwell. Things that were necessities when we married are regarded as luxuries by us now, because of our utter inability to obtain them. The butcher's bill is becoming a burden greater than I can bear. The name of rent-day is as the crack of doom to us. We despondently ask one another "how we are to live?" and not even echo answers us satisfactorily. With a brain warped by the perpetual endeavours to "calculate" our expenses down, with a mind cramped by dwelling under a weight of monetary trouble which it is powerless to uplift, I still ply my pen incessantly in vain attempt to supply the incessant needs. At this juncture a solution of the heavier difficulties of the situation is offered for our consideration—a social system for the future which, if it proves practicable, will, at the cost of the sacrifice of a trifling selfish independence, do much towards restoring the financial position of all such temporarily embarrassed families as like to try the plan, and make the trifling sacrifice.

A friend, with a wife and the same number of children as we have, comes to us one day, and proposes that we take a house, servants, and governess together—that we exactly divide household expenses—and, in short, try whether two kings cannot reign satisfactorily in Brentford.

The plan has a foreign odour about it, which is a rank offence to the majority of our friends when they hear of it. Nevertheless it appeals to us; we resolve upon making the experiment; and how it succeeds shall be told very shortly.

CHAPTER II.

THE preliminaries of beginning life afresh economically with the Bertrams, are rather more costly than an indulgence in all our own most extravagant ideas during the last few years would have been. Mr. Bertram is in the same branch of the Civil Service as Archie, but his salary is much higher, and his tastes are altogether more florid than Archie's. The latter's never very expensive notions about beautifying life have become narrowed by a train of unfortunate circumstances. He has got into the habit of paring life of everything pretty, of abolishing everything that embellishes it. But now, under the new co-operative order of things, Archie launches out in company with the bolder spirit in a way that astonishes me.

We begin to economise by taking a very much larger house than the one we have hitherto occupied, in a better neighbourhood, and at a higher rent. This last item, we all four observe to each other, is utterly unimportant, for are we not to divide the rent between us? And would it not be too sharp an ordeal to put ourselves to, were we to commence the harmonious arrangement, in a house in which we should be everlastingly infesting each other's footsteps? The house is "cheap, too, after all, being what it is—very spacious and most imposing in appearance." Accordingly we take it, at the comparatively low rent, move our respective household goods and families into it, and then discover that it must be repapered, painted, and varnished from garret to basement.

"It will look at least a hundred a year better, and the expense will be a mere nothing—between us," Mr. Bertram says enthusiastically. "We'll choose papers that will harmonise our furniture, and take off that look of our things having been pitchforked together without the exercise of much taste."

I back out of taking any part in these debates, as a rule, but when it comes to a question of papers I feel that I must speak.

"Let them be Morris's," I plead, humbly. "All those French papers are so many blows in the eye, after getting used to the early English style."

The truth is, I have only "got used" to the early English style in theory yet. But I think of my old china, and Venetian glass, and Chippendale chairs; and so I strike a blow for the only papers that can do justice to their charms.

The papers are got, and hung; and we stand about in our empty rooms and regard them admiringly, and feel how well our furniture—now relegated to various cellars and out-houses—will look when replaced and re-arranged. But the feeling of perfect satisfaction is of brief duration. It strikes us all that, if we would not have a look of incongruity prevail, we must have early English chintzes to accord with those eye-refreshing papers. And by the time the chintzes are procured, it is felt that it would be an insult to them to associate them with those modern abominations, walnut-wood, curly-legged chairs.

It is a pleasant sight to see the house, that had been so glaringly modern, becoming mediævalised under our joint auspices; only the process is not altogether pleasant. It is the hottest season of the year, and the season is the hottest that has been known for many years. Under these circumstances the odours of paint and varnish, intensified as they are by the heat, become almost unbearable. To the great gratification of the other lady member of the firm and myself, these are the few isolated weeks of the year in which our respective husbands can get away for their grindingly-earned holiday. They go; and we remain behind in the home of paint and chaos, for the system of economy forbids that the various sets of workmen—who are employed in making us exquisitely uncomfortable in the present, in order that we may be dazzlingly beautiful in the future—shall be left to their own devices unsupervised. Accordingly we remain in the disordered house in broiling London, and I enjoy it because of the novelty, and she enjoys it because she has the executive power—the one so rare in woman—and things seem to be setting themselves in order in a most hopeful way.

Presently unexpected and not to be disregarded duty calls Mrs. Bertram away,

and I, the least able of the quadrilateral, am left in sole charge.

I receive the countless directions which are given to me, in the sweet spirit, which is born of the knowledge that I am utterly incompetent to carry one of them out in a satisfactory manner. I am to "take the time," each day, of the job-workmen who come in at odd hours to do different things! I picture myself spending weary hours with a note-book and pencil in my hand, wondering when they came, and wishing they would go, and being in a hopeless fog altogether about the business. My brain reels as I look at the list of the superfluous decorative articles that have to be returned, and at the other list of the absolutely needed articles that must be procured, without delay, from far-distant corners of our not too compact metropolis. I long for a shady corner in the house, to which to retire, and "think out" my difficulties, and there is not one left. The curtains and blinds are not fixed yet; the sun has it all his own way; and, altogether, there are times when I feel that this is a perfect slough of despond, through which I am walking into the paradise of future experimental peace and comfort.

But the temporary feeling of despair vanishes, as do other unwholesome mists, before the bright shining sun of conscience, which nurtures the innate knowledge we all have of its being both wise and well, both our duty and our pleasure, to bring our own individual wills and wishes into subjection, very often to the wills and wishes of the other members of the confraternity. To me there is no merit in resigning the shadow of authority. I am devoid of household ambition. If the effect is pretty, graceful and pleasant, I am thoroughly well content that someone else should cause it to be so. Mrs. Bertram, on the contrary, feels actual pleasure in actively conducing to the success of our schemes. We were both of us sufficiently in possession of our senses, when contemplating the untried position, to be aware that there could not be two nominal mistresses in the house. She shrank from neither the trouble nor the responsibility. I did from both. The result is that we supplement each other well, for her unselfish acceptance of the post of manager-in-general leaves me quite at liberty to pursue my own avocations, untroubled by the thought that the weekly books are still unchecked, and unharassed by the consideration that cook will come to me

presently for orders about a dinner of which I have not yet thought.

Granted that it is only women who can adjust their angles in this way—who could exist together under such a régime—surely there must be many pairs of such women endowed with our respective characteristics in every circle. The one must like household authority, the other must be utterly indifferent to it. Surely I am not singular in being this latter thing? As for our husbands, men are never petty in these matters; and they are proving that it is quite possible for two kings to reign in Brentford.

The great facts of such a system, if carried out, will be that two families live in this way in a better style than one can if living alone; that four young children receive a good education at half price; that one woman of our class out of every two will be left free to pursue some special art, or profession, or trade—for ladies of high birth and position are going into trade in these days without any thought of degradation; and that a generous breadth, and a more tolerant and forbearing spirit, will be infused into many hitherto narrowed family circles. And all this without destroying privacy, for I am assuming that in all cases such shall be secured to each member of the united families, if it be deemed desirable.

PHOEBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER LXVIII. "DO YOUR WORST."

It was now the morning of the day fixed for the festivities at Joliffe's Court; the last of the grand company had arrived, and not a bed was to be had at the time for ten miles round. A swarm of London upholsterers and arrangers—i.e., gentlemen nailing crimson cloth wherever that material could be nailed—had arrived, while Tootle and Finney's orchestra, nearly twenty strong, were actually quartered on the premises.

What had been "thrown out" by these lath and canvas architects, it would be hard to give an idea of. In every direction the house was made to bulge out on the gardens, for fresh accommodation, though the Court was a huge building, and certainly had rooms enough. The decoration of those improvised chambers was of the

most airy and elegant style: and the thought of the bill made even Mrs. Pringle feel unpleasant.

At breakfast, when the mail came in—a heavy one for such a large party—Mr. Pringle said to his neighbours, after reading his own despatches:

"Only think, my son is coming after all. He could not give up the pleasure. And indeed I always said he ought to be here."

"But his wife is ill, is she not?" some one asked.

"Well, but you know," said the duke's son, with great earnestness and gravity, "where there's a thing of this kind, you see, really—"

"In short," said Lord Garterley, "when there's a fancy ball in the case, all other things give place. That's as it should be. Still I hope there's nothing wrong with the poor sweet soul. She is the most interesting little creature I have met; only for her illness she of course would be here in a brilliant dress."

There was silence for a few moments, and presently the carriage drove up. It had come from the station, and brought Mr. Pringle in a high state of elation. Among his "traps" was the case containing the precious garments.

"Well," said Lord Garterley as he came in, "what news? good?"

"Oh, it was finished in time," said the young man. "I believe they worked night and day."

"Oh," said the other impatiently, "I was asking after your wife."

"Oh, she!" said Mr. Pringle; "oh, yes, thank you, she's pretty well. Where's Miss Lacroix?"

That lady was in one of the canvas chambers, superintending some last touches, or rather indeed putting them herself. While she was thus engaged, Mr. Brookfield passed through. His face was stern.

"You have brought back Mr. Pringle," he said, "that is an achievement to be proud of."

"I had nothing to do with it," she answered calmly; "and I do wish you would forbear these unjust accusations—I have nothing to do with his return."

"It is useless," he said, "I see, arguing with you on that point—you will not understand that you are bound to exert such influence as you have over this foolish creature. It does not do to remain passive."

"This is, and will be, our favourite

point of difference to the end of the chapter," said she.

"Moreover, you mentioned one day that you wished to stand high in my opinion, such as it is. But that was evidently a *façon de parler*."

"You say that," she said eagerly. "I mean it still. If you are hoping for such a proof, I am only too willing to give it; say when and how."

"I leave it to your own conscience."

"Conscience!" she repeated impatiently. "Why should I do anything for a person who dislikes and, I believe, despises me?"

"Hard words," said Mr. Brookfield. "But," and here he drew near to her and sat down, "but really there is something very strange about your character—something in your perseverance that must in the end prevail."

"You think so?" she said. "Oh, I cannot tell you how it delights me to hear you say so. It is some encouragement for me. But I will tell you what I will do; what will you say if I leave this family at once, for good and all? Would that win your approbation?"

"What!" he said, starting, "really give up your friends here—and at once?"

"This very day if you wish it."

"No, no," he said, "that would be too harsh. But you are such a dangerous person—that—"

"I will go to Mrs. Pringle at once. They are under obligations to me, and cannot refuse if I make a point of it. The young wife shall be sent for at once. But she shall not find me here."

"Well, that is hard certainly; but you will see that it is only right. You have really a noble nature: I did you wrong, and I ask your pardon for it."

"I am so accustomed to be misjudged," she said sadly, "that it can be no offence. It is my own fault, too; I have a hard, ungenial nature, I believe; I was told so when I was a girl; I was misunderstood, and treated as a vindictive character all the time I was at school. I disdained to refute such unjust judgments. Ever since, this contemptuous habit has clung to me. And as people seem to persist in misconstruing my actions, perhaps my demeanour is the cause of it, having from habit assumed what is imputed to it. Thus you see my life has been a sort of gentle martyrdom; but now you have made me happy by owning that you have a better opinion of me. There!" she

added impatiently, "there again, I can see you think that I am acting a part, even in making this confession."

He had in fact turned away with a smile.

"Well," he said, "now that you have made that really magnanimous concession, the next point is to communicate it with as little delay as possible. Luckily I am running up to town, I shall be there in three hours' time, and gladden the heart of the poor exile with the good news. It will restore her to health on the spot."

Miss Lacroix had drawn herself up, with flashing eyes and scornful lips.

"You say this on purpose. What, after degrading myself by such concessions, is this the return?"

"It is only carrying them out a step further—the logical consequence, in short."

"How coldly, how cruelly you talk! Can you not see what I mean, that this woman is odious to me?"

"Why, what! after all the principles you explained a moment ago!"

"Not on account of herself, but because she stands in my way—takes from me what I esteem and would like. Yes, there is my confession, and you are welcome to it. I dislike her because I can see that another likes her. I tell you she is not worthy of you. You know not what she is, I do. Mind, I warn you."

"My dear Miss Lacroix, this has been a most extraordinary conversation. I really think the best course would be for both of us to forget it as speedily as possible, and never recur to it again."

She had recovered her composure, and gave a rather forced laugh.

"I think so too," she said.

"I declare," he said, looking at his watch, "I have only twenty minutes to catch the train. No, no," he said, "that is un peu trop fort. Besides, it's not consistent with the first portion of your declaration. You must own that. Well, you will carry out your promise, will you not? Come, forget our little bickerings and be magnanimous."

"You quite mistake me. What I proposed was with a view of gaining your esteem. You have now shown me what you think of me. I decline."

"Oh! then my expedition comes to nothing," said he, "at least from that point of view. But I must go all the same."

So saying, he bowed and took his leave.

She looked after him with a bitter glance of humiliation.

"It is ended," she said. "Rather let me begin now, as I ought to have done long ago!"

CHAPTER LXIX. A DISCOVERY.

PHŒBE was sitting in her room, looking into the fire, her pretty chin resting on her hand. Many were the long hours she thus consumed. Sometimes she fell into a little doze, and dreamed the brightest dreams, of glittering lighted rooms, in which her lithe figure was moving, set off by costly dresses. Then, as she advanced, she found herself met by dark, threatening men, who warned her off. There was no friendly face—and she would wake to find the apartments prim, and hard, and stiff, and herself alone. It was hard that she should be thus deserted and proscribed.

She remained very weak and languid. She had wonderfully recovered, sufficiently to take a drive, in which, however, with all the people about her, she felt the more lonely. Poor little soul, she had had, and was having, a weary probation! She asked herself often, how all this was to end, what had she done—what crime had she committed, to be thus punished? Again we say, poor little soul!

It was now getting towards evening, and she roused herself. Mrs. Dawson took in that faithful chronicle of the aristocrats, the Court Journal, on which she would probably have taken an affidavit with the same reverence as she would on the authorised volume. Phœbe cast her eyes over it listlessly. She did not care for the description of the marriage of "the Hon. Cam Jenkinson with Miss McSaltire," and the attendant ceremonies, or the account of the ball at Calom. But she started as her eye fell upon a heading, "Forthcoming Fancy Ball at Joliffe's Court," and she read with extraordinary curiosity a full account of the preparations—the decorations, the upholstery, the guests and their dresses. She devoured it almost greedily, repeated it aloud, as her way was when she was alone; for she could not read with her eyes only, but "made" each word with her delicately-cut little lips. Every dress was set out—how the duke's son was to be clothed, how Mr. and Mrs. Charles Webber—"Ah!" she said aloud, "so they are there; what fun it would be to see them! And Lord Garterley as Falstaff! Oh, that would be droll!" and in spite of her gloom she laughed outright.

But what was this?—"Mr. Francis Pringle's dress, that of a French noble, will

be one of the most tasteful of the whole, being rich and becoming. It was partly designed, as many of the costumes were, by a lady of great taste and accomplishments, Miss Adelaide Lacroix, who has been for some time stopping at the Court."

Phoebe read to the end in a sort of stupor.

So this was why he was so eager to get away from her—the "business" that obliged him to set off!

And then this Miss Lacroix who was coupled so oddly with his name? For she had an instinct that there was something more than mere accidental relation! Who again was this Lacroix—who was "Adelaide Lacroix?" the sound had a familiar chime—it was nearly like one that had sounded long ago in her ears, and sounded disagreeably too. Suddenly she gave a cry. "Lacroix: Cross! Adelaide Cross! I knew it! It is she!"

How long she sat looking at the page, she did not recollect. She was roused by some one entering.

"Mr. Brookfield, ma'am, wishes to see you."

"Yes, yes," said Phoebe passionately, and almost catching at him as he entered. "You will tell me about it. Oh do, do!"

"I have come to tell you about it," he said, sitting down in his calm way. "I find that you have a great enemy down at Joliffe's Court, to whose efforts I really believe your exclusion is owing—"

"I know," said Phoebe eagerly. "Adelaide Cross, or what is the double dealing name she has taken—"

"Lacroix. Yes. What I have come to tell you is that, at this moment, her feelings against you are stronger than ever. So the time has come for you to act."

"Yes, yes," said Phoebe; "I wish to do so—I must—"

"May I advise you?—you recollect that I did so on one little occasion when I first became acquainted with you. I assure you I have a deep interest in you, and wish to help you, but you see it is a delicate matter."

"I understand," said Phoebe piteously, though she did not exactly. "What am I to do? tell me, and I will do it."

"Take the matter into your own hands. Present yourself at your father-in-law's house, they must receive you."

"The very thing," said Phoebe, who had a spirit beyond the frail and delicate frame that enclosed it. "Once there I shall know how to behave. But how am I to go? who is to go with me?"

"There is your brother Tom, he is just

the person. But lose no time: set out at once."

"Thank you, oh thank you," said she. "And you are going now?"

"Yes," he said, "I must, I have business. But au revoir."

Phoebe, when he was gone, looked after him from the window, and nodded to him when her pretty eye caught his.

CHAPTER LXX. A PLAN.

HE had only been gone a few minutes when Tom appeared.

This was so welcome a surprise, that she screamed with delight as she ran to him.

Tom folded her in his arms, and kissed her again and again.

"My pet, my treasure!" he said, "you look pale and worried. Oh! all this must end. I'll see to it."

"Oh! Tom," she replied, "such an idea has come to me. That good Mr. Brookfield suggested it—that I should go down and take my place, and let them turn me out if they please!"

Tom laughed.

"Not a bad notion. And do you know what I have found out? They are giving a tremendous—"

"Fancy ball? I know, Tom."

"Set of ours! But I'll deal with them, never fear. They were too quick for me once before, but shan't be a second time, I can tell them."

"When shall you be able to go, Tom? You'd come with me, wouldn't you?"

She waited for his answer, her lips reflecting and trying to anticipate what was in his thoughts; so on those mobile lips you could read her own, they quivered with such an airy tremulousness.

"Go? When? Let me see. We'll go to-night—now!" said Tom, slapping the table.

She clapped her hands with delight. Married as she was, she was still a girl, and with more congenial surroundings would have relished a bit of fun at any moment.

"Nothing easier," continued Tom. "No time for a fancy dress now, but no matter. Put up one of your best ball-dresses, you can dress at the nearest inn. Let me see, it's now seven; start at nine, and we'll be there at twelve—in the room, I mean."

Not a moment was lost. Phoebe was presently busy with her maid—the disputed maid—selecting a dress. There was her hair to be done, but done it was, and with rapidity, and when Tom returned,

there she was with all packed up, and in a sort of trembling excitement.

"Come along," cried Tom. "Here's a cab; where's the box? Now all in, and away we go."

Down in the train he said many times: "Won't it be fun when old Sam sees you dancing opposite him? He'll rub his eyes, won't he? Make out Brookfield first, and get him to bring you in. Send in for him."

"They'll recognise me in the hall, won't they?" said Phoebe timorously.

"Leave it to me, then. I'll send in myself for him. Then that—well, as he is your husband, I'll say nothing of him."

There was a time when Phoebe's eyes would have flashed, and she would have done battle like a little bantam for her husband. Now, any speech of the kind did not seem to offend her. She wondered at it herself.

A little after eleven they found themselves at the Joliffe's Arms, where carriages were waiting, and a great crowd gathered to see the gaudy dresses as they emerged. Phoebe was inclined to stop and watch with the rest, but Tom soon contrived to obtain a room, using the Pringle name ("she was one of the family," he said, "and no one could gainsay it"), and there Phoebe made her toilet. It was not a very complete or regular one, but it did fairly well, and would pass, considering the hurry and the circumstances. Then they emerged. It was but a short way to the house. There were plenty of cabs and carriages, and they were soon at, or close to, the great door of Joliffe's Court. It was with a nervous feeling that Phoebe surveyed the walls and battlements of the imposing place that one day she was to call hers. Awe-stricken, she said hurriedly to Tom:

"Do let us get down before we reach the door, and let us walk round and look in at the windows."

A little astonished at this proposal, Tom nevertheless agreed. They got down and walked round. As we have said, the process of "throwing out" in the shape of alcoves and pavilions had been carried on all round with needless abundance. From many a window on the ground-floor canvas enclosures protruded, some being of wood, with windows, through which the interior, lit up and decorated in blue and white stripes, could be seen. There was a large number of these little boudoirs, each tenanted by a small party in their theatrical dresses.

Never was there such a glittering illu-

minated scene. Phoebe was enchanted, and though a little nervous said:

"Now, Tom, you can go for Mr. Brookfield. I will wait at that greenhouse-door."

Tom went his way. Phoebe approached cautiously, wishing to peep in.

The greenhouse was illuminated with the usual Chinese lanterns. It seemed deserted. But just as she turned away she saw two figures, one "on the arm" of the other, coming down the centre between the rows of flower-pots, and making for the door, from which a few steps led out upon the lawn. Phoebe drew aside into the shadow. They passed quite close to her. She was sure it was going to be "great fun," but ought she to listen?

What! was she sure that her eyes could be trusted? Was that her husband?

Yes, there he was, with a devotion and insinuation that he had rarely exhibited to her, fervently pleading—and to whom? In the dress of Charlotte Corday, but grown, finished, with the air of a woman of the world, stately and animated—there was Adelaide Cross.

Phoebe knew her at once. This was the meeting of the two girls after that long interval; and, strangely enough, there came back on Phoebe, at that moment, Adelaide's defiant words at parting: "She must not think that her behaviour would be forgotten."

She would not rush out and interrupt them, although she longed to do so. No, she would stay and listen—hear every word.

They stood in the moonlight on the step.

"But I cannot listen to you," Adelaide was saying. "You have followed me here, and I tell you to go away."

"I understand," he said, "as I have understood all along. I have not forgotten our old vows at the garden-gate. Nor have you, I think, forgotten them."

"How good that is," she said, with scorn; "you that so basely deserted me, and—"

"It was not my doing, as I have so often told you. I was blinded—I was taken in by the prattle of a child."

The listening "child" was near uttering a cry, but she restrained herself; she longed—thirsted to hear more.

"What is the use now of such thoughts, even were all that true? It is too late now."

"No," he said, dropping his voice—"not if you—not if I speak plainly." He whispered.

"What! the scandal of an elopement! out of the question! Well, it is really a sort of compliment that you have proposed such a thing to me."

"But—" he began.

Now, at last, Phoebe could restrain herself no longer, and stood before the pair.

The former school-girls looked at each other fixedly. But their characters seemed to have been transposed. Phoebe was composed, and even stern; while Adelaide seemed confused and humble.

It was she who spoke first.

"You heard what we were saying. It is a fancy ball, recollect; and people talk in character."

"This is your revenge then!" said Phoebe, looking at her fixedly. "It is pitiful, very pitiful."

"As I live," said Adelaide, "you mis-judge me; indeed you do! It was another reason."

"What one?"

"I cannot tell you that."

No one seemed to expect explanations from Mr. Pringle; even Phoebe seemed to regard it as a folly that was in character.

"I shall not say anything of this," said Phoebe, firmly to him. "But you must bring me in—give me my place. Come!"

He was quite cowed and confounded, and obeyed.

"It was nonsense and folly," he began to murmur—"a joke."

"Hush!" said she; "and you come also," she added, addressing Adelaide; "or I shall disclose what I have heard."

"Perhaps they will not accept your story."

"Mr. Brookfield will. He is here, I know. I shall tell him, and he will know how to make me be believed."

Adelaide turned away her head; then said with a forced smile:

"You must have your way this time."

They set out through the greenhouse. As Phoebe emerged from the dark foliage of the shrubs and ferns into the blaze and glitter of the ball-room, she was almost bewildered amid the shifting, crossing figures, so richly and gaudily attired; she could not distinguish faces or recognise them. So they swept by as the music crashed out, and it seemed like a noisy garish dream.

But she knew that good-natured voice that came from the huge portly figure of Sir John Falstaff.

"What! don't you know me?" cried Lord Garterley; "and you here at last!"

Well, that's only right. Where are you going now? Have you seen Sam—old Sam?"

"We are trying to find him," said the dazzled Phoebe.

"Ah, there's Mrs. Pringle, she will do as well. Take your wife up to her at the top of the room."

Seeing that he hesitated, Lord Garterley said:

"Well, come with me;" and led the way through the crowd.

Mrs. Pringle, smiling at every one, the queen, as she fancied herself, of the assemblage, was little prepared for the person which Lord Garterley was bringing to her. She had almost forgotten Phoebe's appearance, and though there was an irregularity in the costume, still it but made it the more probable that it was some distinguished being the peer was introducing. Under this impression she produced her stock of smirks and simpers of reception. Then the actual state of things dawned upon her, and a look of anger and annoyance overspread her face. But Lord Garterley was not to be denied. He was overpowering.

"Here is the right thing at last; met your son bringing his wife into the room. Make it all up, receive her. See—every one is beginning to look," he added, in a lower tone; "there will be such a talk and scandal. If it gets into the Post, your ball will be spoiled."

It was such a night of good-humour, and things were going so well, Phoebe was so smiling and pretty, and the hostess so helpless, that Mrs. Pringle put out her hand; and Phoebe having wrung it affectionately, took her place by her.

"Now I must find Sam for you," said Lord Garterley.

But this was a more difficult task.

While he was away Mr. Brookfield came up in the black velvet and purple dress of a Venetian senator.

"You have taken my advice," he said, "and it has answered well, you see. In fact, from the beginning, I think all my counsels have."

Phoebe was in such a flutter she could hardly reply coherently.

"But," she said, naturally, looking at him with unconcealed delight, "how well you look in that dress! I mean, how well it suits you!"

And here was old Sam led back in his fool's dress. So grotesque and appropriate was it, his stout contour being brought out most effectively by the tight-fitting dress,

that Phœbe could not help laughing. But what was it that was over Sam to-night? He was constrained—his jests lacked humour, or rather spontaneousness. So with Mrs. Pringle—every one noticed that her smiles were rather forced, and wondered that on so great a night they were not on the pinnacle of exultation. Nay, was it not known in the room that, through the intervention of Lord Garterley, who had at last done something practical and unselfish, a great magnate had promised his vote and interest to Sam—a support that was likely to turn the election?

When Sam came to Phœbe, all he said was :

"Well; you're there, are you? You can stay as long as you can. That's as much as I can say."

Then Phœbe's old, rehearsed speech came back upon her, and she said :

"Oh, if you would let me show you that I can be your daughter—"

"Oh, humbug!" said Sam roughly; "keep that for the novels. Hi! along here we go; clear the road for the future M.P.!"

And away he set off with his favourite antics.

"Pity Sam makes such a goose of himself," some one said (a remark made nearly every day); "to-night his fun seems to hang fire."

"It's a low style of fun at the best."

Thus the guests commented on their worthy host. Again our pretty Phœbe knew not what to make of all she saw. She was in such delight—in such a dream! One thing was certain, there she was restored—established—given back to her place. No more trials, none of those cruel buffets of fortune—bills—"tradesmen in the hall;" nothing but wealth and happiness.

Alas for this last! She thought that this might come after all. Where was he? He, too, might change. But could she ever be the same to him after what had passed? She turned away from the thought with a sort of shudder. Where was he? Where had he gone? Where was she?

Adelaide was not far away. There were the hostile eyes, regarding Phœbe as though with the murderous purpose the character she had assumed once entertained.

There was rage, defiance, dislike in that glance. Phœbe returned it, with confidence. At that moment Mr. Brookfield, the Venetian senator, was by Phœbe's side, and the next he was walking about with her on his arm.

The sight of Adelaide kindled the gentle Phœbe's anger. She became excited, and poured out her little soul to her companion.

"See her," she said, "how she watches me! She has been determined on my destruction from the first day."

"What, Miss Lacroix?"

"Yes! Adelaide Cross, her true name. I believe she changed it merely for the purpose of contriving these plots against me, so that if I heard it I should not recognise it."

"Not unlikely," said he. "An ambiguous name is a useful thing."

"And to-night—do you know what I discovered?"

The eyes of Adelaide were still watching them.

"What was it?"

"Why, as I came round the house outside, I saw two figures come out of the greenhouse. They talked, and I could not help overhearing them. One proposed—oh, that I should have to tell it!—that they should elope, and she, what do you think she said in answer?"

Adelaide had come up quite close.

"So you are telling him," she said. "I know well what you are saying. But you are the one responsible."

"I?" he repeated.

"Yes, you—you defied me, recollect. Besides, there is less harm in my relation than in yours, recollect that. I do not care for him. Well, you understand me, I see."

He did not reply for a moment. Then said, in his quiet way :

"You ought not to stay in this house any longer. Indeed, you cannot after what has passed."

Phœbe said haughtily, "I will take care of that."

"I will save you the indignity," she answered, "of being worsted in the struggle, as you were before. Your friend Mr. Brookfield will tell you that I intended retiring of my own accord, should you ever come upon the scene."

With this speech Charlotte Corday haughtily withdrew, and left the pair.